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SUBJ: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTION: KIEN HOA PROVINCE

1. BUDDHIST INSTITUTE ANTI-ELECTION COMMUNIQUE: TOLD EMBOFF AFTERNOON AUGUST 18 THAT BUDDHIST INSTITUTE AUGUST 13 ANTI-ELECTION COMMUNIQUE HAD BEEN RECEIVED KIEN HOA AND TRANSMITTED TO THE FAITHFUL. THIS FIRST DIRECT INDICATION THAT AUGUST 13 NON-COOPERATION INSTRUCTIONS HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTED THROUGH LOCAL UBA REPS TO PAGODAS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY. SAID HE EXPECTED BUDDHIST FAITHFUL TO OBEY, BUT ADMITTED VHD COMMUNICATIONS WITH PAGODAS "IN THE COUNTRYSIDE" TENUOUS. HE ATTRIBUTED THIS TO GVN AS WELL AS VC.

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WHILE ASSERTING UBA OPPOSED TO COMMUNISM, UBA POSITION THAT KY GOVERNMENT DOES NOT ENJOY CONFIDENCE OF PEOPLE AND THUS IS INCOMPETENT TO HOLD ELECTIONS. REMINDED EMBOFF THAT "RIGHT NOT TO VOTE" OBSERVED IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS FRANCE AND THE US. OTHER SOURCES IN KIEN HOA REPORT THAT TWO PAGODAS IN PROVINCE CAPITAL TRUC GIANG (BEN TRE) HAVE RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY TO UBA APPEAL. OTHER PAGODAS STILL CONSIDERING MATTER. MOST OBSERVERS IN KIEN HOA BELIEVE EFFECT OF UBA APPEAL WILL BE MINIMAL. HOWEVER, IT MUST BE RECOGNIZED THAT IN LIGHT OF FACT UBA TRADITIONALLY WEAK IN THE DELTA, ANY NOTICEABLE ABSTENTION FROM

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 12/6/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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VOTING BY KIEN HOA BUDDHISTS WOULD BE SOURCE OF SATISFACTION TO USA (AND VC).

2. VOTER REGISTRATION AND SECURITY: 115,168 VOTERS REGISTERED, 10PERCENT INCREASE OVER 1965. 11,500 MILITARY PERSONNEL AND DEPENDENTS INCLUDED. 58 POLLING PLACES SELECTED. MACV RELIEVES EXISTING SECURITY FORCES IN PROVINCE GENERALLY SUFFICIENT

TO PROTECT POLLING PLACES. HOWEVER, VC CAPABLE CONSIDERABLE HARASSMENT IN AREAS CONTAINING APPROXIMATELY 16,000 REGISTERED VOTERS. THERE ARE NUMBEROUS INDICATIONS VC PLANNING DISRUPT ELECTION, AND VC ANTI-ELECTION PROPAGANDA BECOMING EXTENSIVE. NO OVERT ACTS AGAINST CANDIDATES OR GVN ELECTION PREPARATIONS YET NOTED.

3. THE CANDIDATES: ONE LIST DISQUALIFIED BECAUSE ONE MEMBER PREVIOUSLY DISMISSED GVN SERVICE FOR CAUSE. EIGHT REMAINING LISTS COMPETING FOR TWO KIEN HOA SEATS. TWO LISTS HAVE BEST CHANCES: LIST VI, NGUYEN QUI NINH, CATHOLIC ANE RETIRED SCHOOL INSPECTOR. NINH ENJOYS RESPECT HIS COMPETITORS, SUPPORT OF CHURCH (WITH OVER 50,000 MEMBERS IN KIEN HOA, MOST OF WHOM LIVE IN RELATIVELY SECURE AREAS), AND GARNERED MOST VOTES IN PROVINCE COUNCIL ELECTIONS LAST YEAR. LIST VII, LE QUANG HAO. HAO, AS PROVINCE COUNCIL CHAIRMAN AND EX-RURAL PACIFICATION CHIEF, HAS ENJOYED CONSIDERABLE EXPOSURE. HAO WAS MEMBER ELECTORAL LAW DRAFTING

COMMITTEE, IS AN AVID POLITICIAN AND SEEMS TO BE RESPECTED.

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4. LIST V, NGUYEN NGOC HUNG, AND LIST II, NGUYEN NGOC KY, ARE INVOLVED IN BEN TRE CAO DAI QUARREL. IF EITHER SHOULD GARNER MOST OF CAO DAI VOTE (THERE ARE MORE THAN 50,000 CAO DAI IN KIEN HOA) HE COULD PROVE STRONG CONTENDER. KY IS SON OF CAO DAI BEN TRE FACTION FOUNDER NGUYEN NGOC THONG AND WILL CAPITALIZE ON THIS FAMILY ASSOCIATION. TWO YOUNGER BROTHERS REPORTEDLY JOINED COMMUNISTS; ONE IS NOW DEAD, THE OTHER IN FRANCE. SOME CANDIDATES ALLEGE KY AT HEART A NEUTRALIST AND ENJOYS COVERT VC SUPPORT. HUNG, A COUSIN, IS EX-VC CADRE NOW EMPLOYED BY PROVINCE CHIEF LT COL DAT IN EFFORT TO RALLY BEN TRE CAO DAI TO GVN (AND FOR DAT). DAT HAS RECENTLY ENCOURAGED FOUNDING "COALITION OF CAO DAI OF THE WESTERN REGION" OF WHICH HUNG IS GENERAL SECRETARY. HUNG CAMPAIGNING ON "SOUTHERNERS UNITE" SLOGAN AND WILL CAPITALIZE ON "COALITION" (WHICH MAY SOON BE IN BUSINESS OF

DISTRIBUTING GVN RELIEF SUPPLIES TO THE POOR) AND COL DAT'S INFLUENCE. WHETHER KY OR HUNG WIN OR NOT, THEIR RELATIVE STRENGTH IN COMING ELECTION WILL PROVE INTERESTING TEST OF DEGREE TO WHICH CAO DAI OF KIEN HOA BENDING TO PRO-GVN BREEZE.

5. OTHER CANDIDATES: LIST I, LE DUY YEN. YEN SAID TO BE RUNNING TO ENHANCE PERSONAL PRESTIGE, NOT SERIOUS POLITICIAN. LIST III, TRAN VAN BUU, WILL HAVE SUPPORT OF LABOR WHICH, HOWEVER, IS NOT STRONG IN KIEN HOA. BUU LIVES IN SAIGON, IS NOT WIDELY KNOWN IN TRUC GIANG. LIST IV, BUI VAN DUONG. DUONG, A CONFUCIANIST OF OLD SCHOOL, EFFUSIVELY PRAISES KY GOVERNMENT AND IS DISMISSED BY OTHER CANDIDATES AS PASSE. LIST VIII, BUI VAN XUAN, A FORMER TEACHER, IS SAID TO BE WELL LIKED. SAYS HE IS RUNNING BECAUSE "IT IS DUTY TO DO SO".

6. ADMINISTRATIVE PREPARATIONS AND PUBLIC REACTION: THE PACE OF VIS ACTIVITY IN SUPPORT OF ELECTIONS IS ACCELERATING. KIEN HOA PROVINCE RADIO ALREADY BROADCASTING DAILY 35-MINUTE ELECTION PROGRAM, IN PROCESS TAPING 5-MINUTE ELECTION SPEECH FOR EACH

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LIST WHICH WILL BE PLAYED THREE TIMES DAILY BEGINNING AUGUST 26.
US OFFICIALS IN VIEN HOA BELIEVE THAT PROVINCE ADMINISTRATION
IS MAKING CONSCIENTIOUS AND WELL-CONCEIVED EFFORT GET OUT THE
VOTE. SOME SCEPTICISM EXPRESSED THAT ELECTION WILL BE CONDUCTED
FAIRLY AND CAN HAVE ANY POSITIVE RESULT, BUT PUBLIC IS BECOMING
AWARE GVN INTEREST IN HAVING LARGE TURNOUT. LODGE
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